SUMMARY

2003 NOAA FISHERIES CONSTITUENT SESSIONS

Caribbean Region

Washington, D.C.
December, 2003

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals are responsible for making the 2003 Constituent Sessions for the Caribbean region a success. To acknowledge the contributions of each of these individuals by name is not possible because so many people and organizations assisted in this endeavor. We especially thank the participants for sharing their views during the sessions. Without their participation, the constituent sessions would not have been successful.

We thank the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) for all their support, both financial and in-kind. It is gratifying to be part of a process in which a federal agency actively seeks its constituents' opinions on important issues. Dr. William Hogarth, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries, participated in each of the constituent's sessions. Without his participation, the process would not have been so well received.

Finally, we thank the Pacific States Fishery Management Commission for selecting **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP to help with the 2003 Constituent Sessions. We have learned a great deal from listening to the fisheries stakeholders and we hope that knowledge is reflected in our reports.

MERRELL**K**ATSOUROS LLP

Merrell**K**atsouros LLP is a registered limited liability partnership in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Mary Hope Katsouros, Esq. and William Merrell, PhD, founded the **M**errell**K**atsouros Partnership in June of 2002. The Partnership focuses on developing policies that balance the use and conservation of our ocean and coastal resources. The Partnership also provides public education on marine resource issues. Core competencies at **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP include the abilities to understand complex interactions of human systems with natural systems at local, regional and national scales and to apply these understandings to the design of governance principles and management systems. **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP personnel are recognized experts in formulating strategic approaches to issues and in designing specific solutions to critical issues by taking a vision or concept to goal statements, then to definitive objectives, and finally to performance measures.

Mary Hope Katsouros and William J. Merrell of **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP prepared this report as part of the requirements of their Contract with the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The series of reports produced under this contract reflect the views and interpretation of **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP and not those of the National Marine Fisheries Service or the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP is solely responsible for the report and its contents.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER 1
THE PROJECT

1.1 Origin and Description of the Project

Present-day laws, policies, and paradigms encompassing management of U.S. Marine Fisheries can be traced back to the recommendations of a 1969 report, *Our Nation and the Sea,* by the Commission on Marine Science, Engineering, and Resources (Stratton Commission). The recommendations of the Stratton Commission led to the creation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in 1970 and the transfer into this new agency of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), then the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries.

The Stratton Commission also laid the groundwork for the passage of the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976. A principal feature of the Act was the creation of eight (8) regional Fishery Management Councils that represented a decentralized, participatory system with significant stakeholder involvement in fisheries conservation and allocation decisions. Over the years, the eight councils have evolved individually and exhibit significant differences with respect to policies, practices, and levels of public participation and access.

Most stakeholders believe that the present system of fishery management needs improvement, but they are unsure about the nature of the problem, the type of change required, the possible options, and how best to measure progress.

As the diverse interests of marine resource stakeholders increasingly diverge, and as the political resolve to reshape existing legal and regulatory processes grows, there is a critical need for a systematic evaluation of fisheries management and the process of public participation in that management. To generate information important to the pending reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA, P.L. 94-265), Congress and the National Marine Fisheries Service are working to better understand ways for the United States to fulfill its responsibilities in marine stewardship. Recent and ongoing evaluation efforts include: the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, Congressional hearings on Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization, and a number of Congressionally mandated studies (key works: National Academy of Public Administration, Court, Congress and Constituencies: Managing Fisheries by Default; National Academy of Science, Science and Its Role in the National Marine Fisheries Service; Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, A Perspective on the National Marine Fisheries Service: Issues and Recommendations); and National Academy of Public Administration (Kammer Report), An Independent Assessment of the Resource Requirement for the National Marine Fisheries Service.

A key recommendation of the Kammer Report is that "The (NOAA Fisheries) Assistant Administrator design and implement processes for developing and evaluating its programs and updating its policies that involve constituents and partners where these groups or individuals have expertise and/or will be affected." This project is a response to that recommendation.

1.2 How the Project was Conducted

NOAA Fisheries, working with the Pacific States Fisheries Management Commission, contracted with **M**errell**K**atsouros LLP to schedule a series of regional constituent sessions and to evaluate constituent's e-mail communications. The purpose of the sessions was to gather public input on ways to improve the effectiveness of NOAA Fisheries and its management of living marine resources.

The regional sessions were a collaborative effort that involved all major marine fisheries interests. The primary objective was to assemble and analyze the diverse opinions, attitudes, and perspectives of marine resource stakeholders as they relate to the broad themes of U.S. fisheries management. A secondary objective was to identify possible performance measures.

The meetings were announced in the *Federal Register*, on the NOAA Fisheries web page, and on the web page of each of the regional Fishery Management Councils. In addition, stakeholders unable to participate at the regional sessions were encouraged to use the E-Comments pilot program to share their views. The following questions were developed to assist stakeholders:

1. What are the most important issue facing fisheries in your region?

2. Who has responsibility over this issue? If unclear or uncertain, who should be in charge?

3. Does the solution require (a) no change to the present administrative or statutory structure; (b) administrative changes, and if so what would you propose; or (c) statutory changes, and if so, what would they be?

4. How could one measure if the solution is being properly implemented and working?

5. Briefly describe the best way to keep you informed about changes within NOAA Fisheries and fisheries management?

The constituent sessions for the Caribbean region were held in conjunction with the Caribbean Fishery Management Council. The Council graciously arranged and announced the constituent sessions,held on June 20, 2003, in St. Thomas, U. S. Virgin

Islands. Ninety-one stakeholders participated. Nineteen of the stakeholders made statements. In addition, two e-mail messages were received that commented on fisheries management in the region.

At the beginning of the each session, Dr. William Hogarth presented his views on the status of U.S. Marine Fisheries. Dr. Hogarth's presentation is summarized in Chapter 2, and a copy of his visual aids is available in Appendix 2. There was also a discussion about the region's fisheries led by Dr. Hogarth and the NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrator. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the Regional Council, the fisheries under its management, and important topics now being considered. After the presentations, the stakeholders presented their views. A summary of the stakeholders' comments is contained in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2

U.S. MARINE FISHERIES – PRESENTATION BY DR. WILLIAM HOGARTH

This chapter contains a summary of the national status of U.S. Marine Fisheries presented at the regional constituent sessions by the Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries, Dr. William Hogarth. Appendix 2 contains Dr. Hogarth's slides.

The following are excerpts from Dr. Hogarth's opening remarks:

> *…We do have great fisheries in this country. We know that management works, and it's just a matter of working together.*
>
> *…We're responsible and you're responsible for managing around 952 stocks, of those, 259 of them are considered major, and some are considered minor stocks. When we say minor, the only reason is because we look at it from a standpoint of landings, because we have to give Congress a report. Each year we give Congress a report on major and minor stocks.*
>
> *Twenty species have come off the overfished list in the last five years, and 25 fish stocks have come off the overfishing list. We still have 86 overfished stocks, but about 70 of*

those already have rebuilding plans in place. We implemented a schedule to have all 86 stocks with rebuilding plans no later than 2005 [two of them in 2005, the rest (84) of them will probably be in 2004)]. We added seven species last year and we took six off. So it goes back and forth when you manage a stock for conservation and use.

If you look at the commercial fishery in the U.S., we land about 9.5 billion pounds in the U.S. and we're the world's fourth largest fishing nation. These fish have value at dockside of about 3.2 billion dollars. We import about 18.5 billion dollars in fishery products and we export only 11.8. So, we have a deficit in fisheries related trade.

…U.S. Citizens consumed about 14.8 pounds per person in 2001 and last year shrimp was the number one crop in the U.S. It overtook tuna.

…We are importing between 60 and 70 percent of all the seafood we utilize in this country, and we're importing about 88 percent of all the shrimp utilized in the U.S. We import shrimp from 33 countries. We do not currently have the standards on antibiotics in this country that other countries have. We are getting quite a few shrimp imported into the U.S. and, in turn, that has really flooded the market. The imports are really becoming a problem for our fisheries and we need to look at how we can help in this effort. I think aquaculture from foreign countries is

producing very inexpensive products. A lot of money is being invested.

We don't do much in this country with aquaculture. We are in the process now of trying to determine the role of NOAA Fisheries and how we should be doing aquaculture.

…The recreational fishing industry has over 17 million people that fish. They make 65 to 70 million fishing trips per year. They land about 135,000 metric tons…

…Over 17 million Americans participated in recreational fishing in 2002, totaling over 65 million fishing trips and supporting almost 350,000 jobs with an economic impact of more than $30 billion.

…The economic value of the commercial fishery is also around 28 to 29 billion dollars. Therefore, we're dealing with a total fishery worth close to 60 billion dollars in gross national product. If you look at management of overfished stocks and opportunities, that could be increased at least 15 to 20 percent. So, we have our work cut out for us.

We have about 349,000 jobs supported by the recreational industry. Factoring in personal incomes and related expenditures, it really gets to be very big business.

The top ranking recreational fishing state, of course, is Florida. California follows in second place. If Texas provided data, Texas would be ranked number three.

Excerpts from Dr. Hogarth's slide presentation follow:

THE STATE OF U.S. MARINE FISHERIES IS IMPROVING

…The State of U.S. Marine Fisheries is improving. We have been making steady, incremental, progress in improving the nation's marine fisheries.

- *Status of Stocks: 932 federally managed stocks*
- *259 major stocks account for 99.9 percent of total landings, the rest (672) are considered minor stocks*
- *695 stocks have unknown status*
- *86 stocks still listed as overfished, but we continue our commitment to rebuilding*

LET ME TELL YOU WHY:

I think we are improving. In the last five years, we have reduced the number of stocks from both the overfished and overfishing categories:

- *Overfished – 20 removed, 7 added = +13*

- *Overfishing – 26 removed, 12 added = +14*

- *70 rebuilding plans have been adopted*

MY PRESENTATION WILL FOCUS ON:

- *Value of U.S. Marine Fisheries: Commercial statistics, Recreational Statistics, and Import/Export Statistics*

- *How the Region is Doing*

- *Challenges and Goals*

VALUE OF U.S. MARINE FISHERIES
U.S. RECREATIONAL FISHERY STATISTICS

- *Over 17 million participants*

- *Over 65 million fishing trips per year*

- *Over 135 thousand metric tons landed per year*

- *Economic impact of more than $30 billion*

- *More than 349,000 jobs supported*

Ecosystem-based management affects the recreational industry quite a bit in that one needs to look at Marine Protected Areas or other things that may protect fish. If you look at Number 3 of my goals, where it says stabilize for maximum economic benefit, I think that recreational is part of the maximum economic benefit. The big issue in the future is the allocation between commercial and recreational because the recreational industry is growing.

MY TEN GOALS

1. *Review National Standard 1 Guidelines*

2. *Explore Ecosystem-based management*

3. *Stabilize fisheries for maximum economic benefit and improve rebuilding plans*

4. *Increase communication and cooperative research with industry*

5. *Promote U.S. seafood*

6. *Incorporate ocean observing system*

7. *Minimize bycatch and develop new gear technology*

8. *Develop pilot projects in aquaculture*

9. *Improve timeliness and responsiveness in management*

10. *Export gear technology internationally to help recover endangered species*

We have made great progress in management. There are a lot of success stories, but we still have a lot of work to do. We need to make sure that we take credit for what has been done and we should be dedicated to improving management.

Summer flounder is coming off the overfished list. The surfclam and ocean quahog are no longer classified as overfished. Squid and butterfish are no longer overfished. Salmon runs this year are very high.

The listing criteria for the Endangered Species list, the Jeopardy Standard, and Essential Fish Habitat are all issues that must be covered. The Council is required to designate Essential Fish Habitat for all of these 952 species for four life stages.

We need to be timelier and more responsive. I don't know if we can do anything with that before Magnuson is reauthorized, which will probably be in about a year.

We are trying to beef up our Constituent Services in NOAA Fisheries.

My [Hogarth's] *job, and people might disagree with me, but the job I took is to manage these fisheries for maximum economic benefit to the country. And that means that you are going to have stocks that will be reduced to probably 50 to 60 percent of their natural levels. I feel pretty confident that cooperative research is an excellent way to make progress.*

We need to do a better job of promoting seafood in the U.S. Just because a stock is overfished, does not mean it should not be utilized by the American public if a rebuilding plan is in place.

CHAPTER 3
THE CARIBBEAN REGION

3.1 The Council

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council (CFMC) is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The CFMC includes the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands. It has ten members, seven who vote and three with voice but no vote.

Four of the voting members are appointed by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce upon recommendations of the Governors of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The other voting members are directly designated by the Act: the principal officials from Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands with marine fishery management responsibility, and the Regional Administrator for the National Marine Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office (SERO). The three non-voting members are: the Director of the Southeast (Atlanta) Region of the Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Commander of the Seventh (Miami) District of the U.S. Coast Guard (IUUSCG), and a representative from the U.S. Department of State (USDS).

The CFMC has its headquarters in San Juan, Puerto Rico. It is unique in being the only council that does not include one of the fifty states of the Union and in sharing fish stocks with many Caribbean nations.

The Caribbean Fishery Management Council is responsible for the creation of management plans (FMPs) for fishery resources in waters off Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. FMPs are submitted to the U.S. Secretary of Commerce for approval and implementation in the EEZ upon approval of the Federal Regulation. Local governments adopt compatible legislation for the conservation of the fishery resources within local waters around Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands.

Recreational anglers in Puerto Rico (including out of state) made 1.4 million fishing trips in 2001. There are 230,000 recreational fishermen (shoreline and boat-based) in the U.S. Caribbean. There are over 50,000 recreational vessels registered in Puerto Rico and over 3,000 recreational vessels registered in the USVI.

The Council, in collaboration with the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, the University of Puerto Rico, and other local and federal agencies, has begun to identify species composition of the deepwater reef-forming corals in the EEZ using high-resolution digital photos, which allows for identification of the deepwater reefs.

The preliminary results show an incredible diversity of species in healthy coral reef communities that are worth preserving for future generations.

The Council has also contracted to map and obtain high-resolution bathymetry through side scan sonar and multi-beam of the MCD no-take zone, established in 1999, off St. Thomas, USVI and the deepwater seasonally closed areas of St. Croix, USVI. These areas are fish spawning aggregation sites for groupers, snappers, and other fish species. Mapping of these deepwater habitats in the EEZ is a high priority in the efforts of the Council to identify and describe essential fish habitat. In addition, the Council will be funding a new project on coral reefs. This will produce an inventory and atlas of corals and coral reefs, with emphasis on deepwater coral reefs within the U.S. Caribbean EEZ. This project was approved as part of the NOAA Coral Reef Program, which funded the Councils that have coral and coral reefs under their area of authority.

3.2 Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for the Region

In the U.S. Caribbean, one of the most successful bases for the development of fishery management plans has been the information brought forth by the commercial fishermen with an interest in maintaining healthy fisheries.

Presently, the Council is responsible for four fishery management plans. The plans are:

1. Fishery Management Plan for the Spiny Lobster Fishery of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

The spiny lobster fishery has been under management since 1981, with compatible regulations of size limits and the banning of taking egg-bearing females throughout the state and federal jurisdictions. The percent of undersized spiny lobsters taken commercially has continuously declined to less than 20 percent. The spiny lobster fishery is currently under assessment.

Amendment 1 adds to the FMP a scientifically measurable definition of overfishing and an action plan to arrest overfishing should it occur, adds to the FMP a section on vessel safety considerations, and revises the section of habitat of significance to the fishery.

Under the FMP, as revised by Amendment 1, overfishing exists when the reproductive potential drops below 20 percent of that which would be available in the absence of fishing mortality. If the spawning potential ratio drops below the 20 percent level, the Council will submit a regulatory amendment to implement one or more of the following actions. Establish a seasonal closure; increase the minimum carapace length; limit the use of short lobsters as attractants; require escape gaps in traps; reduce the number of traps; or establish closed areas.

2. Fishery Management Plan for Reef Fish Fishery of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

The grouper and snapper are shallow water reef fish. These fisheries are the most important fisheries in the U.S. Caribbean. These species are most vulnerable during their spawning aggregations, which are very site and time specific; they occur every year during the same months, moons, and at the same sites. These aggregations are easy targets for commercial and recreational fishermen. Recreational fishing for reef fish accounts for almost as much as the harvest in the commercial industry.

The Council has used seasonal area closures to protect these species and have found this management strategy to be the most effective.

The Council has also prohibited the take of two groupers from the exclusive economic zone (EEZ), the Nassau grouper and the goliath grouper, in hopes of rebuilding their populations.

The fishery management plan for the Shallow-water Reef Fish Fishery of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands became effective in September of 1985. The FMP was prepared by the Caribbean Fishery Management Council to establish a management system for the reef fish resources within the EEZ and the waters under the authority of

the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the Territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands, from the shoreline to the edge of the insular platform.

The FMP that went into effect in 1985 established regulations to rebuild declining reef fish stocks in the fishery and reduce conflicts among fishers. It established the criteria for the construction of fish traps; required owner identification and marking of gear and boats; prohibited the hauling of or tampering with another person's traps without the owner's written consent; prohibited the use of poisons, drugs and other chemicals and explosives for the taking of reef fish; established a minimum size limit on the harvest of yellowtail snapper and Nassau grouper; and established a spawning season closure for Nassau grouper.

3. Fishery Management Plan for the Queen Conch Resources of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

The most successful achievement of the Council in the international arena has been the coordination of the International Queen Conch initiative (IQCI). Since early 1990, the Council has worked with other countries in establishing common fishery management goals and objectives to administer the region's marine fishery resources. The culmination of this work has been the adoption, in 1996, of the Declaration of San Juan, which established the IQCI.

This initiative, coordinated by the Council, and with the participation of the U.S. Department of State and the NOAA Fisheries, has proven to be an invaluable mechanism for the Caribbean countries to exchanges information, and to provide capacity building to countries in need of developing better management strategies.

The Council had proposed the closure of the fishery prior to disapproval of the amendment to the FMPs submitted to comply with the Sustainable Fisheries Act (SFA) requirements. On hold since 2002, the efforts to rebuild the fishery include developing a Geographical Information System (GIS) for queen conch, based on the information provided by the queen conch commercial fishermen.

International efforts have been pioneered by the Council to establish compatible management strategies in the region. The International Queen Conch Initiative was developed in 1996, and continues to promote pan-Caribbean management and monitoring of queen conch.

Queen conch resources occur throughout the Caribbean Sea and in the Atlantic Ocean northward to Bermuda, but populations in certain areas are decidedly overfished and in need of management. Conch are edible marine gastropods that move inshore and aggregate along areas of the insular platform to spawn. Therefore, they are extremely vulnerable to harvest, especially during the spawning season. At a recent workshop in Caracas, Venezuela, the participants filled-out questionnaires to provide landings

estimates of the most recent year available. The estimates covered a range of years (from 1988 through 1991), and represented annual landings for most of the major conch producing nations of the area. The resulting total was 4,168 metric tons or 9,169,600 lbs. The information indicated: (1) that over one-third of the catch was used solely in the Cuban bait fishery, and (2) that landings from Colombia, Mexico, and Puerto Rico all declined considerably in recent years. Cuba led the area in production and was followed in order of decreasing landings by Jamaica, Turks and Caicos Islands, Bahamas, Venezuela (all illegal), Colombia, and Belize; landings by other nations were substantially lower than 100 mt each.

To curb overfishing (defined as a population level that is below 20 percent of the unfished spawning stock biomass per recruit) of queen conch the CFMC has proposed a management program designed to reduce the mortality on spawning adults and prevent the harvest of immature individuals. The management program contains provisions for total or aerial closures, but favors effort reduction as the socio-economic impacts are less severe.

4. Fishery Management Plan for Corals and Reef Associated Invertebrates of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

The Council prohibited the take of all coral, dead or alive, and live rock since 1995. Fisheries in the Caribbean are coral reef based fisheries, both in shallow and deep

waters. The Council is currently involved in the mapping and assessment of coral reefs in the EEZ. A GIS will be prepared from the historical information on deepwater coral reefs.

The fishery management plan for corals and reef-associated plants and invertebrates includes over 100 species of coral (including stony corals, sea fans and gorgonians) and over 60 species of plants (including seagrasses) and invertebrates. The Plan covers two distinct components. The first is a fishery for live invertebrates which are marketed for the marine aquarium trade. Aside from reef-associated invertebrates, this fishery includes what is widely known as live-rock – rock substrate supporting diverse invertebrate life forms. Live-rock is highly valued by aquarists and there is a rapidly growing market for this resource. The second component of the Plan comprises corals and coral reefs. These resources are of enormous value for the reef communities that they support, for their physical capacity to protect coastlines and for their aesthetic value. Indeed traditional coastal fisheries in the Caribbean may best be characterized as coral reef fisheries intimately dependent on the backbone of habitats created by coral reefs and associated invertebrates.

Corals and invertebrate communities not only comprise the physical basis of the reef ecosystem and the fish and invertebrate resources that depend on it, but also exhibit considerable beauty. This means that they are not only essential for the persistence of commercial and recreational fisheries, but are also of incalculable value for tourism and

other recreational activities. It also means that, because of their slow regeneration rates and limited distribution on the insular platform of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, many species are extremely vulnerable to unregulated harvest by commercial and amateur collectors and damage from growing tourist activity. Furthermore, because of their largely sedentary nature, they are unable to escape the impact of a variety of anthropogenic activities, including anchoring and pollution.

This FMP addresses various concerns over the present and probable future condition, in the absence of further regulation, of component species through a number of management measure as follows: It prohibits the harvest or possession of stony corals, sea fans, gorgonians and any species in the fishery management unit if attached or existing upon live-rock, except under legal permit for research, education, and restoration; it prohibits the sale or possession of any prohibited species unless fully documented as to point of origin; it prohibits the use of chemicals, plants or plant derived toxins, and explosives for harvest; it limits harvest of other invertebrates to dip nets, slurp guns, by hand and other non-habitat destructive gear with an exception for permitted scientific, education and restoration programs; and it requires permitting and reporting by harvesters, dealers, and exporters of invertebrates.

CHAPTER 4
ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY CONSTITUENTS

This chapter provides a summary of the issues presented by participants at the constituent sessions and provided electronically through email. The issues have been divided into national and regional topics. For this report, regional issues are issues that primarily affect the Caribbean region.

The 2003 NOAA fisheries constituent sessions for the Caribbean region were held June 20th in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, in conjunction with a meeting of the Caribbean Regional Fishery Management Council. This constituent sessions had 99 attendees, 19 of whom made presentations during the session. Two email messages were received from constituents from the Caribbean region.

The national issues identified by constituents were divided into sixteen topics, and the Caribbean constituents commented on thirteen of them. The sixteen topics are: aquaculture-marine; bycatch-bycatch reduction; councils; ecosystem management; economic, social and cultural issues, enforcement; essential fish habitat; infrastructure **B** land-based; management, Magnuson Stevens Act; marine mammals; marine protected areas; NOAA leadership; overcapitalization/rationalization; Pew Oceans Commission,

National Commission on Ocean Policy; regulatory streamlining; and science/data/observations. Responses to these issues are summarized below:

NATIONAL ISSUES

National issues identified by constituents either at regional sessions or electronically, by topic in alphabetical order, are:

1. Aquaculture - Marine

- Hatcheries should be used to seed commercially valuable species in the ocean

2. Bycatch, Bycatch Reduction

- Need to investigate bycatch in fishtraps

3. Councils

- *No comments*

4. Ecosystem Management

- Should be attempted

5. Economic, Social and Cultural Issues

- Fish are not wasted-every part is used
- Fishermen have to have alternate incomes to make a living

6. Enforcement

- Need more and better enforcement
- Stop poaching by international fishers
- Help train agents in US territories
- Lack of enforcement is demoralizing

7. Essential Fish Habitat

- Need more benthic mapping to help determine Essential Fish Habitat (EFH)
- There is considerable non-fishing pressure on EFH

8. Infrastructure - Land-based

- *No comments*

9. Management, Magnuson Stevens Act

- Conservation groups with their money and attorneys have too much influence on the decision process
- Closures mean AI can=t fish so I can=t support my family or pay my bills.@
- Closures force all the fishermen to fish in one area so that area gets overfished
- Fishers are constantly bombarded by regulations
- Management=s goal should be to balance use and conservation

10. Marine Mammals

- *No comments*

11. Marine Protected Areas

- Other agencies should, as NOAA Fisheries does, work with local groups before establishing Marine Protected Areas (MPA)
- Must be planned and coordinated not imposed
- Need to use common sense

12. NOAA Leadership

- Bill Hogarth has been communicative and the best Assistant Administrator
- One speaker noted, AHogarth has to try harder than the Pope.@
- Needs to work with other agencies such as Interior to coordinate regulations and actions

13. Overcapitalization/Rationalization

- Need to limit entry and eliminate part-time fishers
- Should not attempt to limit entry

14. Pew Oceans Commission, National Commission on Ocean Policy

- Environmental concerns have too much say B fishermen are under attack from Pew Oceans Commission

15. Regulatory Streamlining

- Consultation process in the councils is too slow and too cumbersome

16. Science/Data/Observations

- Need more cooperative research with industry- but industry needs help writing grants
- Science needs to be made simpler for the layman
- NOAA regional laboratories are doing a good job
- Money is level but more and more data is required each year
- Funding gaps mean data gaps

Regional Issues

Topics identified by the constituents, specific to the Caribbean, are the following:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)/local authorities have let effluent from rum factory affect fishing grounds
- The Department of the Interior (DOI), under a Clinton administration mandate, took 30,000 acres of prime fishing grounds without consulting the fishers **B** this has led to overfishing in other areas
- Local enforcement is non-existent in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico
- There is little or no bycatch here **B** everything is eaten or used